

# Congresswoman Karen Bass

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Karen Bass (born October 3, 1953) is the U.S. Representative for California's 33rd congressional district. She has been selected by Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi to serve on the prestigious Steering and Policy Committee which sets the policy direction of the Democratic Caucus. Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer of Maryland appointed Bass to serve as an Assistant Whip.

Prior to her serving as the current Congress member for CA-33<sup>rd</sup>, Karen Bass made history when the California Assembly elected her to be its 67th Speaker, catapulting her to become the first African American woman in the country to serve in this powerful state legislative role.

While Speaker, Bass delivered change and results to her constituents in Los Angeles and the people of California by jumpstarting infrastructure projects to create new jobs in the state. Bass has also championed efforts to provide quality healthcare to Californians and expand opportunities for California's youth.

Under Bass' leadership the Assembly fast-tracked federal economic stimulus legislation that aided Californians who have been affected by the national economic crisis as well as jumpstarted billions of dollars of infrastructure projects.

Former Speaker Bass has proudly authored legislation that expands Healthy Families Insurance coverage to prevent children from going without health care. Bass's legislation also included bills to reform schools and improve conditions and services for youth. Bass has successfully passed legislation that reduces dropouts by expanding multiple pathways in high school to prepare students for college, career and civic responsibility. Another piece of legislation Bass authored provided LA Unified School District with access to over \$600 million in additional school funds.

Bass continues to be an advocate for foster kids and she had carried several bills to support programs and funding to ensure foster youth have better chances for success including legislation that uses federal funds to extend support to California's foster youth to the age of 21 as well as legislation that helps California draw down a share of federal family connection grants. These grants have a proven record of placing foster kids in the healthy, stable care of relatives and decreasing the number of youth in California's foster care system from 120,000 to 65,000 in the past decade.

Even though former Speaker Bass lead an entire house of the state Legislature, she did not forget the constituents of her community. Some of the former Speakers' legislative accomplishments with local impact include expanding the Baldwin Hills Conservancy and securing more than \$2.3 million to help revitalize the historic Vision Theater in Los Angeles.

In an effort to be responsive to the people in her district, former Speaker Bass created the People's Council. This council is a volunteer group composed of community leaders who seek to involve constituents in the public policy process. As Chair of the Legislative Black Caucus, Bass also commissioned a report to research the demographic profile of Black Californians and provide a better understanding of the basic social and economic conditions currently faced by the community.

A lifelong resident of Los Angeles, Bass was elected to the CA State legislature in 2005 to represent Culver City, West Los Angeles, Westwood, Cheviot Hills, Leimert Park, Baldwin Hills, Windsor Hills, Ladera Heights, the Crenshaw District, Little Ethiopia and portions of Korea Town and South Los Angeles and the United State Congress representing Culver City, Hollywood, Ladera Heights, Silverlake, Los Feliz, Jefferson Park and Windsor Hills.

Before her life in office, Karen started her political organizing as a middle school student when she signed up to be a precinct captain for Robert Kennedy in 1968. Bass founded and ran Community Coalition, a community-based social justice organization in South Los Angeles to empower residents to get involved in making a difference. In addition to her 14 years as Executive Director for Community Coalition, Bass has a long history as an activist, creating change on both a local and international level.

Bass also worked for nearly a decade as a Physician Assistant and served as a Clinical Instructor at the USC Keck School of Medicine Physician Assistant Program.

Bass, who had one daughter, Emilia Bass-Lechuga, son-in law Michael Wright and four step children. Emilia wanted to follow in her mother's footsteps and help others; Emilia's passion for life continues to be a motivation for Bass.

Bass grew up with three brothers in the Venice/Fairfax area of Los Angeles. She is the only daughter of DeWitt and Wilhelmina Bass. Bass graduated from Hamilton High School, Cal State Dominguez Hills, and the University of Southern California School of Medicine Physician Assistant Program.